

SONGS OF THE STREETS
AND BYWAYS

BY WILLIAM HERSCHELL



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SONGS OF THE STREETS
AND BYWAYS

Songs of the Streets and Byways

By
William Herschell

Illustrated With Photographs

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To a Comrade Asleep
MY FATHER

This little volume is
affectionately dedicated

AND NOW IT IS REVEALED UNTO YOU—

Friends, whom the author esteems as genuine, said: "Why don't you put them into a book?"

Acquaintances added a handclasp to their declarations that they liked my verses because they were "so human."

A little boy telephoned on occasional Saturday evenings and said: "I liked today's best of all."

And I like some of them myself.

Out of it all has grown this simple volume composed of verses printed in The Indianapolis News under the captions of "Songs of the City Streets" and "Ballads of the By-ways."

The Author

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SONGS OF THE STREETS
AND BYWAYS

THE EXILES

WE'VE got to leave the old home, wife,
Be exiles, you and I;
To these broad fields we've loved so long
We've got to say good-by.
The old farm doesn't need us now;
It only laughs, my mate,
At us two poor, old-fashioned folks
Since it's got up-to-date.
It used to be dependent, dear,
On these old hands of ours;
Mine to tend its grain and grass,
Yours its fruit and flowers.
For when we came and settled here,
And knew life's hardest bumps,
This big, swell-headed farm of ours
Grew nothing else but stumps.

Then—then there came that luckless time,
That sad, ill-omened day
We brought our first self-binder home
And threw the scythe away.

And ever since that time, Louise,
We've squandered all our means
To give this farm its swinging gates
And patent-right machines.

Alas!—for our indulgence, dear—
We're banished into town,
Though we had hoped that here
We'd see life's golden sun go down.

The old place—how we've loved it—
Doesn't need us any more
Since automatic hands perform
The tasks we did of yore.

The windmill pumps the water now;

It churns the butter, too,

And incubators do the work

 Your old hens used to do.

A motor grinds the cattle feed;

It likewise shears the sheep

That patent locks protect at night

 When they lie down to sleep.

The rural-route man brings the mail

 And leaves it at the door,

Thus making void my last excuse

 To loaf down at the store.

The trolley brings the groceries—

 We phone for them, you know—

And parlor films have made our home

 A moving-picture show.

The shredder shreds the corn and me,
The rail fence now is wire,
And some one's sold you some new scheme
To cook without a fire.
We light the house with tanked-up gas,
It lights the big barn, too,
And threshing-time has lost its charm
With salaried boss and crew.
Machinery cuts and loads the hay,
Then stows it in the mow,
And—last and worst—they've found a way
To patent-milk the cow.
So come, let's journey townward, dear,
We're laid upon the shelf—
The old farm's got so dog-goned smart
That it can run itself!

TWO MEN OF THE ROAD

TWO men there were whose journey lay
Down green, tree-bordered paths to-day,
But one had eyes that would not see
The wayside's art-divinity.
He thought but of the motor's grind,
 Of clouded miles he'd leave behind;
He had no mission save to say
 He'd gone so many miles to-day.
The beauty of the woodland's dress
 To him was hazy nothingness.
Just once a grim smile lit his face—
 A fool-bird dared to set him pace!
A fool-bird—poor, misguided wight—
 Dared taunt him to a test of flight.
Thus on and on he blithely sped,
 His only goal—the miles ahead!

He did not see beside the road

 Another man who calmly strode
Amid the shade of glade and glen,

 Then back into the road again.

He did not see the old man's eyes

 Grow glad and twinkle with surprise
When out there hopped a friendly toad
 To blink at him across the road.

He did not hear Bob White's refrain

 Come echoing from down the lane;
He did not catch the plowboy's yell
 Of welcome to the dinner bell.

He did not hear the old man sigh

 In pity as he hurried by—
He did not see him stoop to get

 God's sweetest thing—a violet!



TIMOTHY MACKESSY

Cop Number One

TIMOTHY MACKESSY, Cop Number One!

Good-natured, round-f'atured son of a gun!
Always a-smilin', at fri'nd an' foe—
If the last named he's anny, not one do I
know.

Old folks an' young folks, the fat ones an'
slim

Shout whin they see him: "Begorra, there's
Tim!"

All of them like him, this rev'ler in fun—
Timothy Mackessy, Cop Number One!

Timothy Mackessy, Cop Number One!

It's more good than harm our Timothy's
done.



Down by the depot with smiles on his face
He p'ints all the strangers to Monument
Place.

He hunts all the babies the mothers have lost
An' holds up the cyars till the ladies have
crossed.

It's only the blackgyards that Timmy will
shun—

Timothy Mackessy, Cop Number One!

Timothy Mackessy, Cop Number One!
D'aler in jokes that are all Irish spun.
He bosses the Tunnel an' calls it his cave
An' says whin he dies, shure he'll make it his
grave.

But thim that knows Timmy just laugh an'
reply:

“Begorra, Tim, lad, you're too jov'al to die!”
So live on forever, Apostle of Fun—
Timothy Mackessy, Cop Number One!

THE SHOW PARADE

YOUTH came back to my door to-day,
 Youth, the fugitive; Youth, the gay,
Came with smiles and a twinkling eye,
Bringing me dreams of days gone by.

It called me out to a wayside street
Where children, merry as they were sweet,
Bade me witness—and I obeyed—
Their “grandly marvelous show parade!”

And then there passed in gay review
Three little girls and Rummy, too;
Rummy, the dog, the friend, the clown,
With sunbonnet on, but upside down;

Wagons and buggies and boxes tied
With Tabbies and dolls and toys inside.

Truly a picture to start the flow
Of tear-brewed dreams of a long ago.

Now, through the mist of bygone years,
Our old barn-lot and its show appears.

I see, in fancy, bright quilt tepees,
Rag-carpet tents and a broom trapeze.

I hear old Skeeter, my fellow clown,
Wail at my painting his eyelids brown.

It broke up the show—and I got mine!—
For the paint we used was iodine!

But that was part of the show, you see,
Of Red and Skeeter and Sis and Me;

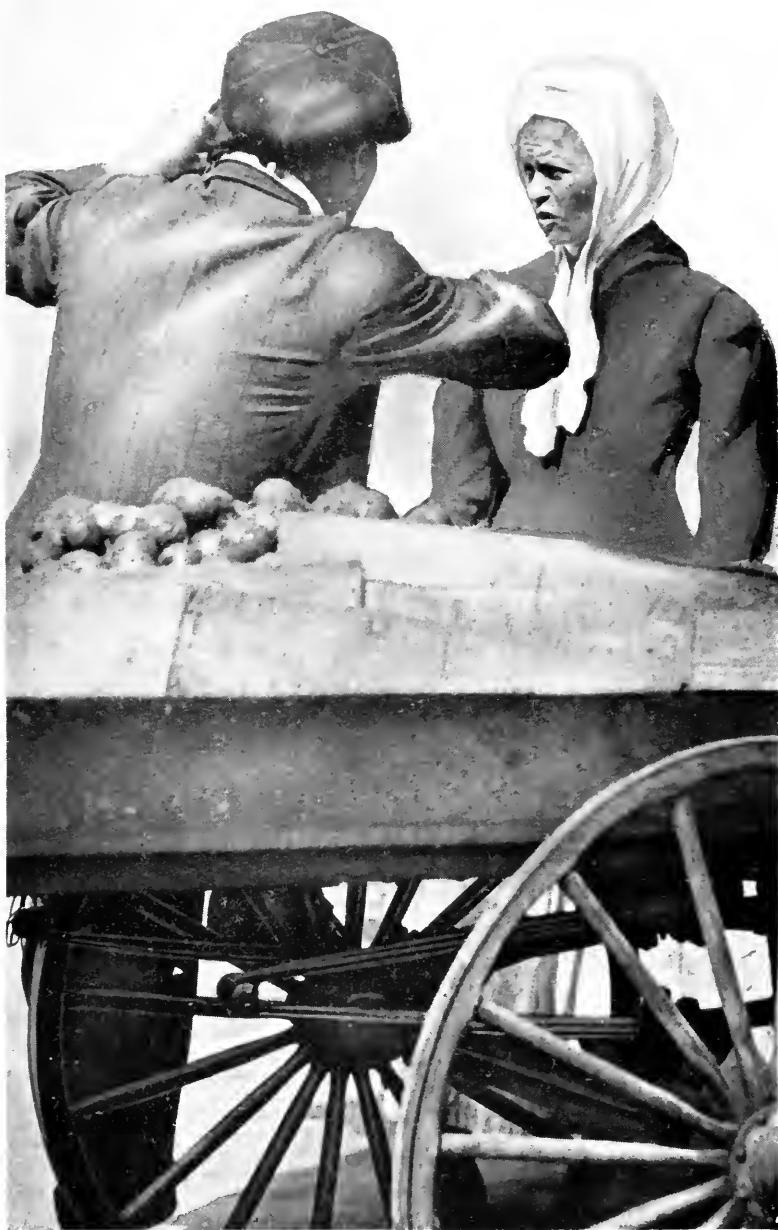
Part of the tortures suffered then
That all, I know, would bear again

Could we, once more, go back and play
Saturday circus—but, here, well, say,
Children, forgive me, for I've delayed
With Yesterday's dreams To-day's parade!



MATRIMONY À LA CARTE

A LADY ees come to my cart,
Wheech standa een da street,
She buy banan' an' evratheeng
So gooda an' so sweet!
On Market day she always come
An' we mak' friendla fun
'Bout w'at I do w'en I geet reech
An' gotta plenta mon'.
She say: "I bet you some day, Mike,
W'en you ees wealtha man,
You geeta stuck on pooty girl
Wheech ees a 'Merican."
But I say: "No, you mak' mistak',
Dat theeng can nevra be,
Eef I am gon' for geet a wife
She come from Eetaly!"
Den she ees look so mad an' say:
"Poor Mike, you foolish guy,
You should have wife bak' Bosta' bean
An' mak' you gooda pie!"



I say: "My goodness, how you talk,
 So pooty an' so swell,
You sounda like you leeve yourself
 Een granda, beeg hotel!"
She say: "Aw, w'at's a matta you?
 You mak' me sucha seeck,
W'en 'Merican got bumma cook
 He mak' wan louda keeck.
Een deesa countra life ees sweet
 An' we want queeck for die
Eef on da table eet ees not
 Some Bosta' bean an' pie!"
My, my, she got me sucha bluff
 I not know w'at to say,
But I am feex for her nex' time
 She come on Market day.
I say: "Go 'way, you 'Mericans,
 You can no cook I bet,
So sweet, so good, like Dago girls,
 Eyetalian spaghetti!"

THE DOWN-TRAIN TO MADISON

I 'VE been as far east as Altoony;
my west mark, I think, is K. C.,
But distance ain't been my ambition—
just leave out globe-trottin' fer me.
I'll let you ride 'round in th' Pullmans
an' revel in dinin' car fare—
Th' Down-train to Madison's my train—
I'll do all my travelin' there!
You ain't been, you say? Well, you've
missed it an' ought to go soon as you can,
That is, if you're not in a hurry an' live
on th' sociable plan.

Th' Down-train goes down in th' mornin',
a-weekdays an' Sundays as well;
Th' Up-train comes back in th' evenin'—
but here's what I'm tryin' to tell;

Th' Down-train's the Neighborly Special,
unmarred by luxurious frill,
It gathers up folks from Columbus
clear down to old Madison Hill.
They git on at 'Liztown an' Hege,
at Scipio, Vernon an' Wirt;
They hop 'er at Queensville an' Grayford,
but nobody ever gits hurt.

It's just like a family reunion
to board th' old Madison train;
You'll meet up with comrades an' kinfolks,
you'll chuckle at sweetheart an' swain.
Bill Moody will git on at Dupont
an' joke at old 'Zekiel York
'Bout bein' so crooked he reckons
that Zeke'll git off at th' Fork.
Then Zeke will git back at Bill's jokin'
an' make th' suggestion that Bill



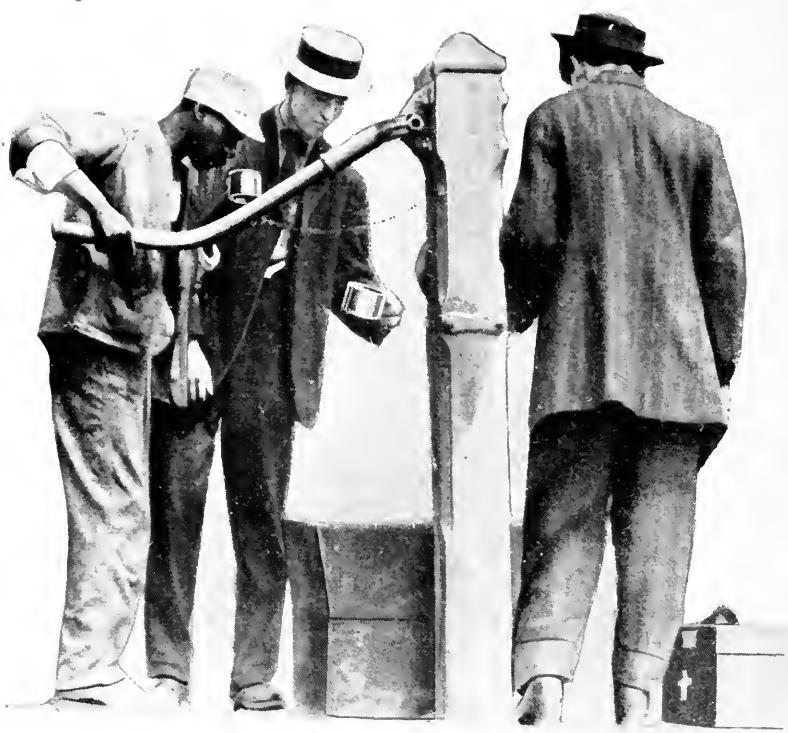
Ain't one-half as straight as th' roundhouse
that stands on old Madison Hill.

Here neighbor says "Howdy" to neighbor,
then turns th' seat over so's he
Can talk of th' crops an' th' weather
an' how times are likely to be.
Th' Down-train is Fellership's agent,
a trait to be truly admired;
Th' Up-train comes back in th' evenin'
when every one's hungry an' tired.
An' so it's th' Down-train I sing of—
repellin' all worry an' strife—
A symbol of Youth, you might call it,
that runs through th' Mornin' of Life.

THE OLD RED PUMP ON THE CORNER

OLD Red Pump on the Corner!
Here's to your matchless brew;
You with a job like a woman's—
 Never an end in view.
Morning and noon and evening
 Your arm extends to greet
The tired and thirsty thousands
 Of the hot and dusty street.
Friend of both prig and prelate
 Foe not to race or creed,
Yours is a holy mission—
 To give men the drink they need.

See how they come as pilgrims
 Seeking an ancient shrine,
Grasping your cup like bibbers
 Famished for favorite wine



Merchant, fireman and newsboy;
Motorman, darky and drone
Draw on your cooling treasure
As if each drop were his own.
Some of your friends are palsied,
Some of them blind and old,
But each finds joy and vigor
In your draught so clear and cold.

Old Red Pump on the Corner!

Of woes you have your share;

They say you gather microbes

And spread them everywhere.

Of course we know grim Science

Must view you with alarm

And make you seem a menace

Devoid of worth or charm.

But we of humbler learning

Find, when the day is hot,

You may be germ-prolific,

But, Pump, how you hit the spot!

“WISH YOU WAS HERE”

GOT a card from Steve this mornin',
Dog-gone his trav'lin' skin,
He's up around Niag'ry Falls
A-writin' home ag'in.
Seems like that boy's one glory
Is wand'rin' fur an' free,
An' furder off he gits, I gosh,
Th' more he writes to me.
He sends these pictur' postal cards,
With photos showin' that
Th' world is allus beautif'lest
Where you ain't livin' at.
His messages reads all th' same—
In letters large an' clear
He writes from Maine or Kankakee an'
says—
“Wish you was here!”



Nobody ever seems to know
 Just when he'll go er where;
We git his destination
 From th' card that says he's there.
An' he ain't more than settled down
 To loaf a day or two
Till he gits thinkin' up th' names
 Of ever' one he knew.
An' then with ever' dog-gone cent
 He possibly kin spare
He buys th' Unitary church,
 Th' Depot an' th' Square.
He buys 'bout ever'thing they is
 In Bath er Belvidere,
Then mails th' whole blame business home
 an' says—
 “Wish you was here!”

I guess he's at Niag'ry now—

He was last time he wrote—

But that don't prove conclusively

He ain't in Terry Hote.

He may be down in Panama

Er snoopin' 'round in Nome,

Nobody knows just where he's at—

Except he ain't at home!

I guess we'd never hear from him

Fer months er mebbe years

If some kind soul had not devised

These pictur' souvenirs.

Yes, I expect if Steve would die

He'd rise up from his bier

To pen a card to all his friends an' say—

“Wish you was here!”

THE HOUSE OF WHERE

BESIDE the winding Friendswood road
A house of weathered gray
Stands tenantless as Eden's realm
Since Adam moved away.

The old house makes me Fancy's toy
And thoughts, unguarded, play
At wondering who abided there
And where they are to-day.

It is, in fact, a House of Where;
Strange voices seem to say:
"O where's the cheer of yesteryear?
The children, where are they?"

The gate, weed-throttled, silent stands,
Its creak has lost its thrill.
The fence has fallen in decay
And tumbled down the hill.



Its pickets bear no sunning crocks,
The groaning pump is still,
No voices echo from the barn
 “Gee-hawing” Bob and Bill.
No mother voice sounds noontime’s call
 To “Come and get your fill”—
There’s naught but silence—everywhere!—
 Monotonous and chill.

The trees, old comrades left behind,
 Cast forth a useless shade;
They seem to wreath in gloom the place
 Where once glad children played.
Where are the little pilgrims now?
 Where have their footsteps strayed?
Where has the mother of the brood
 New habitation made?
No answer comes—but Heaven grant
 The changes they've essayed
Have led them to still brighter paths,
 With spirit unafraid.

HIS FIRST POCKETS

I'M got pockets! Ist like man's—
One for bofe of my two han's!
One for pennies when I'm good
Like my muvver says I should;
One for cookies—yes, an' say,
I had shoc'late drops to-day;
Had 'em in my pockets where
They ain't got no business there,
'Cause they shoc'late up my pants
If they git a half a chance.
'Nen my muvver laugh and say
What's they made for anyway?
Ain't they made for boys to eat?—
Li'l boys 'at's good an' sweet?
'Specially th' kind 'at grows
Up wif pockets in their clo'es!

Daddy he's got pockets, too,
 Ist like all us mans's do,
Still he says it's funny, though,
 Where his pennies all time go.
'Nen my muvver she ist play
 Like she don't hear what he say;
'Nen he says well he suppose
 Burg-u-lars been in his clo'es.
'Nen I say I spec' they do
 An' he says he knows 'em, too,
But he don't—'cause muvver she
 Says he puts 'em there for me.
Muvver she—it don't seem fair—
 Ain't got pockets anywhere.
But she says, gee, ain't it fine?—
 She kin keep her things in mine!



WHEN "20" COMES INTO THE YARDS

THE levers click up in the tower,
The semaphore's arm changes, too;
The yard shanty clock points the hour
When old "Number 20" is due.

From out of the west comes a rumble,
The switch engines sneak from the main,
Forsaking toil slavish and humble
To clear for the limited train.

It's "20" that's coming—old "20"—
Proud bearer of men and of mail;
The symbol of speed and of plenty,
A queen of the caravan trail.



36 "WHEN "20" COMES INTO THE YARDS

The tower man out at the Crossing
 Stands fast by his levers and smiles
As smoke clouds, with turbulent tossing,
 Go trailing old "20" for miles.

He signals down into the city
 That "20" has passed on her way,
Then whistles some lighthearted ditty—
 She's "by" without any delay!

O'er subway, past shanty and siding,
 The wheels whirr in musical chime,
As down through the yards she goes gliding
 And enters the station on time!

Unmindful of joy or of sorrow
 Old "20" speeds east on her run,
Then turns and—re-christened—
 to-morrow
 Comes westward as old "21."

UP ALONG THE RIVER

UP along the river!

What a wealth of beauty lies
In its rippling panorama

Of the cloud-fantastic skies.

Here a castle, there a city

Mirrored up to boat and shore,
Just to taunt my June-day fancies,

Then to vanish evermore.

Now a willow dips its laces

In the warm, dream-hazy tide,
As a dark tadpole flotilla

Scurries off somewhere to hide.

Then I hear a flap of canvas

And the swish of waters rent
By a craft, lone-manned, but freighted

With a cargo of content.

And I catch my own sea-envies
Rising up to wish that I
Were the skipper and the cargo
Of that ship a-sailing by.

Up along the river!
What a joy it is to be
Where the deepest gloom that haunts you
Is the shadow of a tree;
Where the greatest tide that thrills you
Is a river flowing by
And its ripples dancing tangoes
With a cloud rift in the sky.
Dear old Fancy!
How you lure me into June-green paths
to-day—
Paths that lead along the river—
Up the river far away!



There are boats, too—and companions—

In this panorama rare,

And the only joy that's missing

Is the joy of being there.

For I—like legion others

In the city's thrall to-day

Can only dream I'm up there—

Up the river far away!

HOLLYHOCKS

GAY HOLLYHOCKS, who gave you
Such an unromantic name?
One held among the humblest
In the garden's hall of fame.
Who fixed your floral status
So that you must hide your face
At kitchen doors, by backyard fence,
Or other lonely place?

You seem, somehow, a mystery,
And yet your magic bloom
Makes pageantry of poverty
And gives a glow to gloom.
You bring a beam to ashmen's eyes
And all the alley clan
Tiptoes to get a glimpse of you
And your glad caravan.

Why don't you march right out in front
And let your blooms compete
With all the summer's pampered pets,
The garden's gay élite?
Bid each hue-neutral passer-by
To take an honest view,
Then say which plant-aristocrat
Has fairer tints than you.

Parade your pink and yellow hues,
Stand forth in white and red,
Then show with what fine majesty
You lift your queenly head.
Sway back and forth across the breeze
Where rose and dahlia reign,
Till newborn envy shall supplant
Their previous disdain.

And yet you seem divinely sent
To blossom where you do—



Where men of humble walk must pass
And need such joys as you.
So, Hollyhocks, reign on, reign on
By backyard fence and door
That smiles may glowingly abide
Where shadows dwelt before.

UM-M-M! UM-M-M! PASS 'EM
TO ME!

GOOD mawnin', Mistah Meat Man!
Whut's dat Ah heah yo' say?

Yo' got some classic livah
To tempt me wif to-day?

Well, Ah doan' want no livah
An' Ah doan' want no lamb;

Ma eyes am shut to pohk chops
An' Ah ain' a-huntin' ham.

Cross off ma name fo' chicken,
Put sausage out o' sight,
Den please inscribe ma ordah
Fo' some Cullud Folks' Delight.

Cut off a nice, big chunk uv—
Yo' know whut April means—
Ah wants a slab o' bacon
Fo' ma dandelion greens!

Um-m-m! Um-m-m! Pass 'em to me!

46 UM-M-M! UM-M-M! PASS 'EM TO ME!

Dis mawnin' when de dewdrops
Was a-rasslin' wif de sun
Ah ketched ma lips a-smackin'
Lak dey want to hab some fun.
So Ah gethahs up ma basket
An' goes singin' sof' an' low
To de commons down by Fall Creek
Whah de dandelions grow.
Den ma ole case knife went diggin'
In de Providential soil
Till ma eahs dey got to itchin'
Fo' to heah dem sizz an' boil.
So cut me off some hog meat—
Yo' know whut April means—
Ah wants a slab o' bacon
Fo' ma dandelion greens!
Um-m-m! Um-m-m! Pass 'em to me!

THE OLD GREEN SASH

FETCH me ould green sash, Ann Dugan,
Place it with me Sunday clo'es,
There besoide me sprig av shamrock
Sent from where th' shamrock grows.

Press th' wrinkles from me sash, Ann,
Make it so's th' folds will lay
Close upon th' breast thot loves it,
Wears, it, too, S'int Pathrick's day.

I'm t' roide a horse, mavourneen,
Up where all th' world can see
How me heart still clings to Erin,
Land av our nativity.

Oh, ye'll be thot proud, Ann Dugan,
Whin ye see me prancin' by,

Thot within yer heart ye'll whisper:
"There's me Oirish proide an' j'y!"

Shure, ye'll see th' Sheas and Sharkeys,
Wid thim Kelly fri'nds av moine,
Passin' word along th' curbstone:
"There comes Dugan! Ain't he foine?"

How yer dear ould heart will flutter
Till th' tears and laughter clash,
Then ye'll hear yer own self sayin':
"Shure 'twas me thot tied th' sash!"

Though th' years roll on, Ann Dugan,
An' me hair grows deeper gray,
Still thot dear ould sash I'll cherish
Till me lasht S'int Pathrick's day!

FETCHING HOME THE COWS

FRIEND, I know you'll misconstrue me
An' will chuckle when I say

That I've seen a livin' picture

Of my boyhood's years to-day.

Yes, sir; seen it like 'twas human

An' it made th' blood in me

Rise half-skeered an' half-delighted

At its strange reality.

Tell you how it was—now, listen!

Through some impulse undefined

I walked countryward this twilight

Seekin' calm an' peace of mind.

Well, 'twas while I paused a moment

Near the foot of Five-mile Bridge

That a herd of cows come browsin'

'Long a bypath down th' ridge.

Now, that ain't no strange adventure,

 But 'twas queer you will agree,
That among th' livin' cattle

 Walked two cows in phantomry!

Yes, sir; spirit cows, I'm sayin',

 Walked among th' livin' herd,
An' it got me so bewildered

 That I couldn't speak a word.

Comin'—they just kep' a-comin'—

 Till th' mist that dimmed my eye
Made me see old Red an' Molly—

 Cows Dad owned in days gone by
There they were, Red's bell a-tinklin',

 Where they always used to browse,
An' I heard my mother callin':

 “Sonny, go an' fetch th' cows!”

All at once th' world grew newer!

 It was not a world of men;



It was boyhood, all obedient,
 Fetchin' home th' cows again.
Joyously I followed after,
 Tossin' pebbles down the lane,
Urgin' Red an' Molly homeward,
 For th' day was on th' wane.
But my march abruptly ended
 When a man's voice made me rouse,
Comin' from th' hills behind me:
 "Where ye goin' with my cows?"
"Back to boyhood!" I informed him,
 An' I think he understood,
For he answered, kind an' friendly:
 "Dear old man, I wish you could!"

SCHOOL'S OUT AT SHORTRIDGE

SING if you will of the débutantes
And toast all the queens that rule,
But give me the girls—the Shortridge
girls—
On the homeward way from school.

On the schoolward way their steps may halt
And their eyes shed doubtful light,
As they face the pall of Learning's call
And of books untouched last night.

For Youth in blossom is Youth aglow
And none of us dares deny
That the schoolward way was a dull, deep
gray
In the good old days gone by.

But after school! Then Youth sings songs
As it goes its care-free way,
And 'twas thus that I at old Shortridge High
Saw the girls go by to-day.

Their steps were light, their hearts were
light,
Not a book-cloud marred the sky;
The school-day done, they were out for fun
And they had it—so did I.

My heart grew glad as I saw them pass
In caravan gay and sweet,
While echoes of "He" and "Him" and "We"
Were wafted along the street.

Ah, what is sweeter than Youth's first dreams
Of Loves that never may be
Or yields more smiles in the afterwhiles
Of a School-day Memory?



56 SCHOOL'S OUT AT SHORTRIDGE

So here's to the Girls of Shortridge High,
May Life flood their souls with joy,
And could I decree new fate for me—
Well, I'd be a Shortridge Boy!

THE LAMENT OF THE LONESOME GRAY

AN old gray nag, with a droop and drag,
Drew up at the curb to-day,
And, as horses talk as well as balk,
We heard the old steed say:

“Where are the friends, the good old friends
I knew in the days gone by?
The Bills and Petes of the city streets
Are gone—but here am I.

“The motor rage of this speed-mad age
Has driven them all away,
Till now I’m classed with the hazy Past
And known as The Lonesome Gray.

“I gaze to right and my only sight
Is motors of divers style;
I look to left and my soul’s bereft
Of even an old pal’s smile.

“And now I hear—with loss of cheer—
They’re to have a Motor Show
Like the horses had in the golden, glad
Old days of the long ago.

“They’ll shine and rub each spoke and hub,
They’ll make the bodies shed
A lustrous sheen like that I’ve seen
Put on the thoroughbred.

“They’ll talk of pumps, of springs and
bumps,
They’ll gossip of tools and tires,
But never a word will there be heard
Of love for a line of sires.



“Well, I suppose wise Progress knows
The needs of the world to-day.
But my old eyes blur when men prefer
Honk-honk to a friendly neigh!”

“GIT EP!”

DEY is folks dat's allus whinin'
'Bout de burdens dey mus' b'ah,
'Bout de sun ain' nevah shinin'
 An' it's rainin' ev'rywhah.
An' dey nevah do no hopin'
 Fo' de bettah days to come,
But sneak to bed a-mopin'
 An' git up all blue an' glum.
Now, dey ain' no use o' talkin',
 Dat won't he'p de soul along,
So, instid o' standin' balkin',
 Perk right up an' sing dis song:

Oh, Ah's got ma grins a-growin'
An' Ah's got ma hawn a-blowin';
'Tain' no time to be a-whoain',
So, come on, le's git a-goin'—

GIT EP!

Whut's de use ob lamentatin'
'Bout de worl' an' its regrets?
Naw, dey ain' no jobs a-waitin'
Fo' de man dat fumes an' frets.
Yo' may hab to face a sorrow
As a paht ob life to-day,
But de sunshine ob to-morrow
Soon will sweep de clouds away.
It's a fac' dat bein' teahful
Gits yo' nothin' 'cep' a sting—
So, come on, le's all be cheehful!
Th'ow yo' haid up high an' sing:

Oh, Ah's got ma grins a-growin'
An' Ah's got ma hawn a-blowin';
'Tain' no time to be a-whoain',
So, come on, le's git a-goin'—
GIT EP!



THE CIRCUS WAGON'S RUMBLE

FOLKS, I know you're goin' to chuckle
An' embarrass me like sin
With your jov'al accusations
That I'm turnin' boy ag'in,
When I make th' simple statement,
Purged of guile an' fancy free,
That a circus wagon's rumble
Ain't unmusical to me.
Them's th' facts! I say it honest
An' could prove my the'ries true
If you only had th' courage
Of a young 'un's point of view.
Just fergit now, fer a moment,
All your self-devised conceit
An' play like there's a circus show
A-comin' down th' street.



Here she comes! There's no denyin'
It's a picture mighty grand,
With its clowns an' golden cages
An' its heralders an' band.

Now just set your ears fer listenin',
Both a-hark'nin' to'rd th' ground,
So's they'll ketch th' rhythmic rumble
Of th' wheels a-goin' 'round.

Why, it makes my body tingle
From my head down to my heels
When I hear th' rumblin' mumblin'
Of a circus wagon's wheels.

No, I wouldn't say 'twas music,
Like a harp or choral glee,
But I do insist, by doggies,
That it's mighty sweet to me!

I just go around a-listenin'
From th' time it comes to town

Till th' big menag'rie's loaded

An' th' tents are comin' down.

Every wheel I hear a-turnin'

Brings my boyhood back to me,

When I went to bed at sunset

An' got up at half pas' three.

I can tell each wagon's rumble—

Ticket, canvas, cage or pole—

An' I learnt my first real cussin'

From a driver in a hole.

So, you see I'm schooled in circus,

An' no rumbles ever heard

Are as sweetly hypnotistic—

If there is that kind of word.

THE STORY OF THE GAME

SAY, Mister Sportin' Editor,
Please give us kids de space
To tell about de winnin'
Of de Stringtown pennant race.
Ye see, 'twuz like dis, Mister,
Us Little White Sox guys
We played de Blake Street Busters
Four games an' two wuz ties,
Well, dey dis kep' a-claimin'
Dey's champeens, don't ye see?
Dis 'cause deir game stood ten to eight
An' ours wuz four to three.
So we got tired o' listenin'
To all deir champeen stuff
An' challenged 'em to play de rub—
An' 'course dey called de bluff.



Who christianed us de White Sox?

Well, dat's our name all right,
Fer when our team is goin' t' play

We wash our ankles white.

Well, after poppin' off a while

De Busters dey come 'round.
An' said dey'd play us Saturday
Down on de circus ground.

Us captains tossed a bat to see

Which side took in er out
An' dat's de way de game begun
I'm tellin' ye about.

Well, t'ings went nip an' tuck a while
Until de Busters dey

Got to our pitcher an' we t'ought

De stuff wuz off, but say,
De ninth come 'round, de score
It stood ag'in' us—six to three—

Two Sox wuz out—de bases full!—

An' it wuz up to me!

Two strikes! T'ree balls!

De dippy umps wuz stingin' me fer fair—

De next ball up wuz in de groove!

Say, guy, I hit it square!

It bee-lined t'roo de pitcher's box

Wid never slackin' pace

Till—bing! It stuck inside a can

We used fer second base!

Us four White Sox went racin' 'round—

I made de winnin' run

Before dey got dat baseball out!

Dat's how de game wuz won!

De Busters touched us wid de can,

But umps says, wid a grin:

“Ye got t' touch 'em wid de ball

An' not a piece o' tin!”

THE URCHIN AND THE LILY

“**H**ANDS off the flowers,” the park sign said.

The Urchin—what cared he?—
When lilies, from their marshy bed,
Peered forth so temptingly.

“W’at’s flo’rs fer?” we heard him say,
“If dey ain’t fer t’ pick,
Upecially w’en ‘cross de way
Dey’s some one awful sick!”

And ere the park policeman’s shout
Could halt his hand or feet,
He’d plucked a lily, wheeled about,
And hurried for the street.

The water from the petals dripped
And marked his speeding path,



Till through a cottage door he tripped
Beyond avenging wrath.

There, on a bed of snowy white,
The lily bud he threw.

“Gee, looky, sweetheart!” cried the mite.
“Look w’at I brung to you!”

His mother’s pale hands clasped his own
And tear-drops that he saw
Made him to lisp, in tender tone:
“Ain’t you my sweetheart, Ma?”

LONGINGS AND LIMITATIONS

DON'T think that I'm complainin',
folks,

'Bout bein' borned a girl,

'Cause I'm as glad as I can be

I'm not a dog er squir'l.

But, seems to me, boys allus gits

Th' best of ever'thing,

Uspecially when circus shows

Starts comin' in th' Spring.

Fer then they git to go an' watch

Th' circus train unload,

An' see th' elephants an' all

A-comin' down th' road.

But girls—they've got to stay at home,

No matter how they frown,

An' act like growed-up wimmens when

Th' circus comes to town.

Boys gits up mornin's four o'clock—

 My brother does, an' he

Wakes up th' boy next door, but they

 Don't never wake up me.

They never wait fer breakfast time,

 Like girls would have to do;

Dis all they want is crackers, er

 A cold fried egg er two.

Then off they go an' don't come back

 Till supper time, an' then

Go sneakin' through th' backyard gate

 An' see th' show again.

But girls they've got to stay at home

 An' pout an' sit aroun',

An' hate it 'cause they're wimmen when

 Th' circus comes to town.

I bet you when I git growed up,

 An' have things my own way,



I'll go out to th' circus grounds
An' stay there all th' day.
No one can make me stick at home
All dollared up an' swee
An' I'll have all th' lemonade
An' peanuts I can eat.
I'll tell you what girls ought to do,
To not be left alone—
That's buy theirselves a circus show
An' have it all their own
Er else all go an' marry to
Some ackerbat er clown
An' live right with the circus when
Th' circus comes to town

THE VOCALIZING VULCANS

'LONG 'bout four doors down Georgy
Street,

Just off o' Illinoy,

Bill Powell keeps a blacksmith shop—

Bill Powell an' his boy.

Th' shop's just like ten thousand more,

Except in one degree—

It's got some sentiments on toil

That's mighty sweet to me.

Now' days th' order is to work

From dawn till set of sun,

But down to Bill's they do their work—

Then sing when they git done!

Bill's men is all musicianers—

Such good ones, I'll remark,

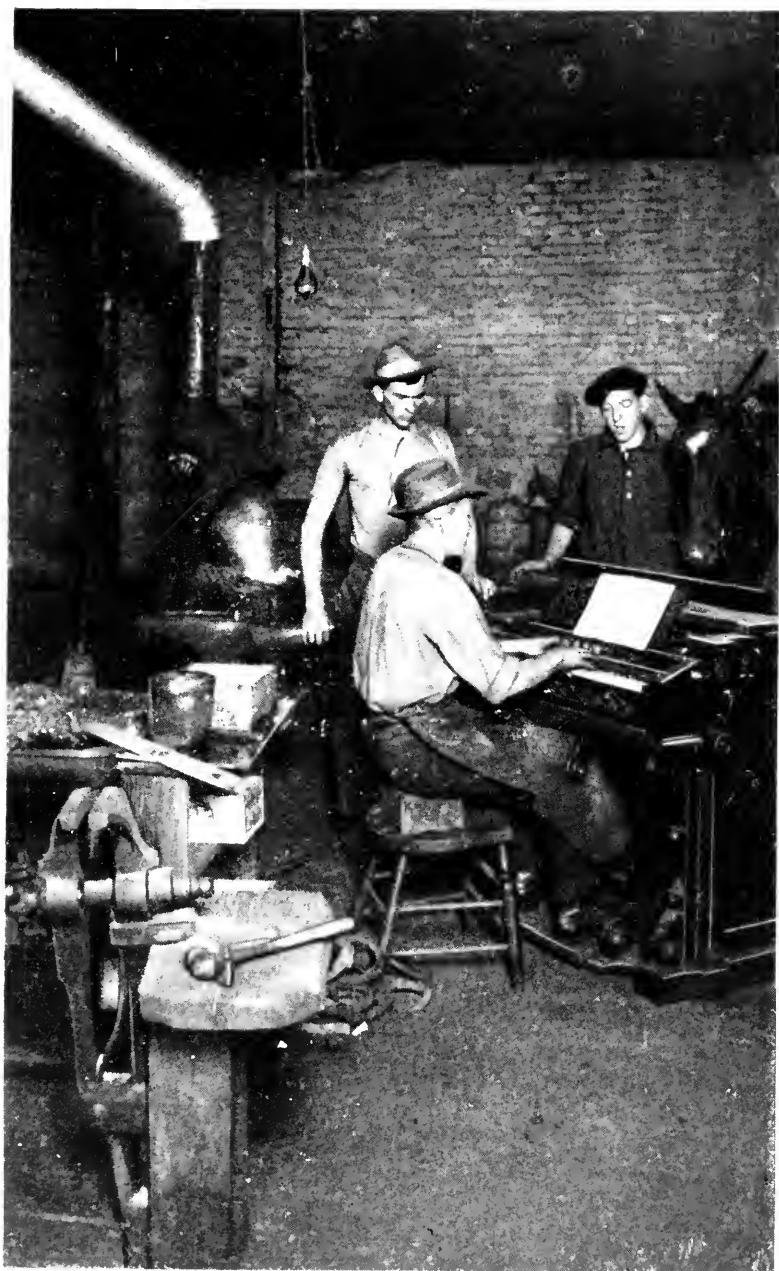
That when their organ starts to play
I'll hang around till dark.

An' it's a reg'lar organ, too,
An Estey worn an' old,
Put still possessed of tones like them
Th' forest choirs unfold.

I reckon 'twas a treasure
In some parlor long ago,
For Bill's boy bought it second-hand—
Or third-hand—he dunno.

It sits around behind th' forge
An', I confess, it's odd
To see an organ in th' midst
Of horses gittin' shod.

Yet, there it is, an' oftentimes
You'll hear th' anvil's ring
A-keepin' time with melodies
Th' smiths and teamsters sing.



But most times it's at close of day
When all th' work is through
That Bill's men an' th' organ
Harmonize a hymn or two.

Th' firelight in th' forge burns low—
Yet high enough so's they
Can see th' hymn book an' th' notes
That Bill's boy has to play.
The' traffic out in Georgy Street
Slows down an' halts to hear
Old "Rock of Ages" ringin' out
In cadence sweet an' clear.
An' there I sit a-thankin' God
That, of th' city's throng,
There's some who find life sweet enough
To blend its toil with song.

THE MUDDLED MODES

YES, Time has devised many changes,
my brother,

I'm not the beau-bravo you once used to
know.

Perhaps I've slowed up, Bud, but somehow
or other

I don't make the breeze that I did years ago.
I now stand around like some preacher on
pension,

And, Bud, you may grasp what my plati-
tudes mean

When I but remark that I'm under great
tension

Since Sister looks forty and Mother—
sixteen!

You don't live at home, Bud; you miss the
confusion

That comes of the styles as they're wearing
them now.

My days are all spent in a maze of illusion—
I can't tell our Mother from Sister some-
how!

Oft times as I gaze down the walks of the
garden

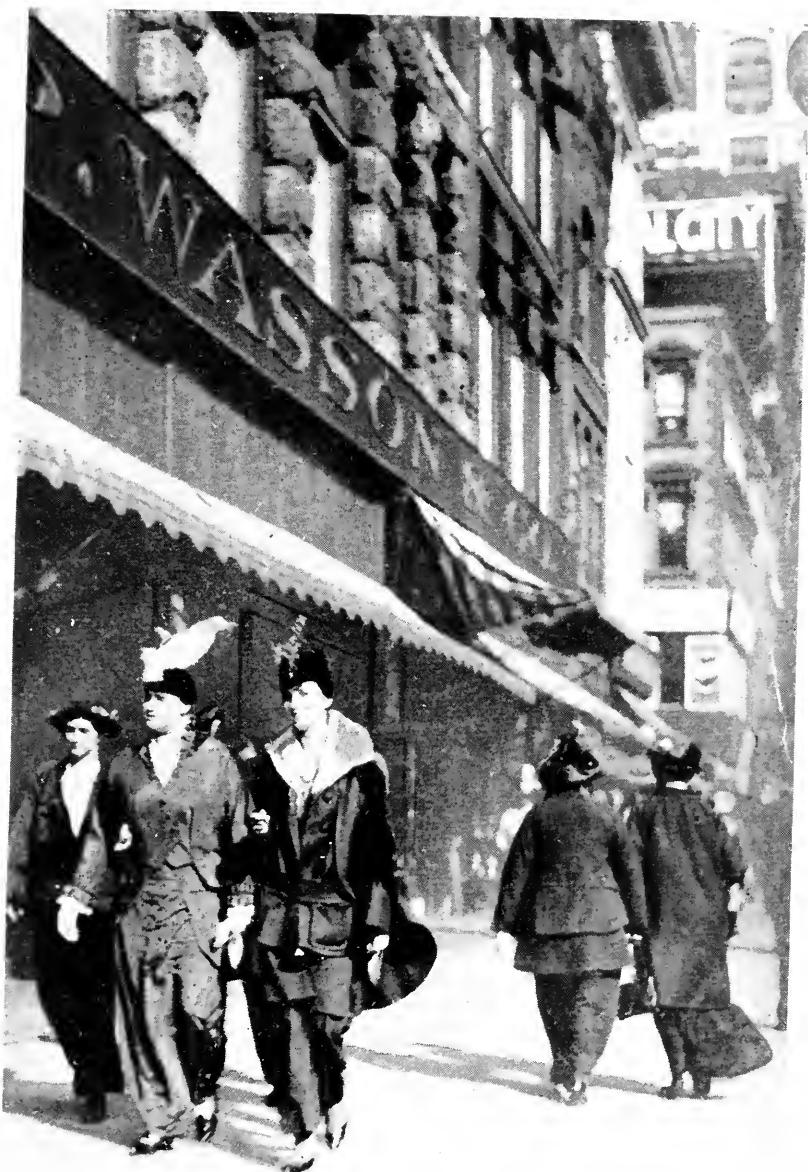
I see a trim figure with grace of a queen;
It looks like our Sister but—I must beg
pardon—

It's tunic-gowned Mother—not forty!—six-
teen!

And Sister—dear Sister—that idolized
creature,

With stately composure she sweeps thro'
the hall,

The girlishness banished from coiffure and
feature—



You'd think her teens vanished forever and all!

She trips off with Mother to tea or cotillion;
They maxixe and tango in chumship serene,
And no man would dare—not one man in a million—

To say which was forty and which was—sixteen!

I see them down-town in the bargaining Meccas,

My heart beats with pride as they Argentine by;

Oh, yes, they walk dance steps—the Eves and Rebekahs

Now move with new grace that is youthful and spry.

And, brother, I like it—with all my inertness—

The man who disdains it is sordid and
mean.

For, though they confuse me, I like their
alertness—

Ma rivals at forty our Sis at sixteen!

MOTHER'S DAY

SO at last we've got to Mother,
By our deviatin' ways,
With a thought to plant some gladness
In th' garden of her days.
We have bowed to men—immortals
An' have made a lot of stir
'Bout th' glory of th' nation—
But we've been neglectin' her!
An', th' fact is, she ain't askin'
Fer no emphasized degree
Of th' thing men call distinction—
Lawsy, no!—old Mother she
Asks fer nothin' more heroic
Than th' feelin', warm an' snug,
Of a Mother's Day remembrance
In a lovin' little hug.



Mother's Day! I like th' meter
 Of its sweet an' rhythmic ring,
Fer it breathes of early Maytime
 An' th' very soul of Spring.
Then it is my thoughts of Mother
 Kind o' run to happy hours
Back behind th' old home kitchen,
 Watchin' her a-plantin' flowers.
An' I draw sweet mem'ry pictures
 Of my childhood long ago
When her step was more elastic
 An' her brow had less of snow.
An' to-day my soul's a-pinin'
 An' my heartstrings feel a tug
That is nothin' more than hunger
 Fer a lovin' little hug.

Folks, they tell me that th' doctrine
 Of our havin' Mother's Day

Is to kind o' ease her burdens
 In a lovin' sort of way;
Just to send her to th' parlor,
 In her newest Sunday gown,
With a sweet command, but final:
 "Mother, now you go sit down."
Pile her high with glad devotions,
 Match her smile with words of praise,
Till you ketch yourself a-wishin'
 All her life was Mother's Days.
Draw her closely, fondly to you
 An' you'll feel her old heart chug
As her tears of gladness thank you
 Fer a lovin' little hug.

HOWDY, MISTAH PUNKIN!

HOWDY, Mistah Punkin!
Good mawnin'! Howdy-do!
I been all thoo de Mahket
To find a scamp lak yo'.
Mammy says to bring yo' home,
An' dat's my 'tention, too—
So howdy, Mistah Punkin!
Good mawnin'! Howdy-do!

Say, Punk, I'll tell yo' fortune,
One sho'ly comin' true—
Ob co'se I knows yo's yallah,
But dis'll make yo' blue—
A cullud lady wif a knife
Am gwine to cut yo' thoo!
So howdy, Mistah Punkin!
Good mawnin'! Howdy-do!



She's gwine to peel yo' hide off,
Take out yo' innards, too;
Den cahve yo' all to pieces
An' put yo' on to stew,

So's when it comes Thanksgivin'
Her boy kin say to yo'—
Howdy, Mistah Punkin Pie!
Good mawnin'! Howdy-do!

A CREEKSIDER COMEDY

SOMETIMES I like th' Winter best,
Then sometimes Spring an' Fall,
But mostly me an' Pizen thinks
Ole Summer beats them all!

We call him Pizen 'cause, you see,
He gits his feet all sore
From pizen vines—an' then he can't
Go barefoot any more.

Ole Pize an' me has lots of jokes
In summer-time when we
Go swimmin' in th' swimmin' hole
Down by the willer tree.

We start a-takin' off our clo'es
Before we're nearly there
An' then I holler: "Last one in
His dad's a grizzly bear!"

An' 'course, his daddy's allus it,
'Cause Pizen can't begin
To git his shoes an' stockin's off
Before I'm divin' in.

Then Pizen he gits even when
He takes th' clo'es I've got,
An' soon's I'm divin' in th' crick,
He ties 'em in a knot.

An' when we're done a-swimmin' he
Goes 'hind some tree to hide
An' yells "Chaw beef!" when I have got
To chew my clo'es untied.

Then soon as we are both dressed up
We stand around an' grin
Till both, without a single word,
Strips off—an' goes back in!



SANTA CLAUS DAYS

O SANTA CLAUS days! What a
mystical maze
You weave all about us to last all our days!
With skeins of sweet legend of fanciful hue
Our hearts are forever held captive by you.
The years may divide the gray present from
youth

And garrulous tongues shatter Fancy with
Truth,
Still, deep in our breasts, beam the undying
rays

Of heart-holy love for old Santa Claus days!

My Santa Claus days! Yes, the ones that I
knew;
I am longing to-night for communion with
you.

Come back down the chimney, O Season of
Joy!

And set me to dreaming the dreams of a boy.
Hang up by the fireplace, on bedpost and
chair

The same baby stockings that used to be
there.

Hang o'er them the wishes, the hopes, of a
child

And let my old heart be a boy's running
wild!

Glad Santa Claus days! As I muse o'er you
now,

Fond memories, green as the mistletoe
bough,

Come trooping before me to laugh and un-
fold

Each joy that was mine in the boy days of
old.

I greet with glad glances the holly, the tree,

And a Romping Old Tourist, whose riotous
glee

Subsides to a smile as he pauses to beam

On a drowsy old man at his Christmas Eve
dream.

Gray Santa Claus days! Though the
journey is far

From Used-to-be days to the dream days
that are,

My faith has not wavered, O Saint of the
Sleigh!

As I loved you in childhood I love you to-
day.

The cynics may scoff and Truth call me a
foe,

But the same old Saint Nick that I knew
long ago

Shall live in my soul till I come to the day
When even my dreams fade and vanish
away!

THANKSGIVIN' PUNKIN PIE

O, TH' luck there is in livin'
'Long about good old Thanksgivin'
When th' crops for which you've striven
Are all safely gathered by.

When th' autumn's harvest story
Is of summer's golden glory,
Then you're feelin' hunky-dory

An' you're wantin' punkin pie!
P— U— Unkin—
Punkin pie!

Then there oozes from th' kitchen
Soothin' odors so bewitchin'
That they set your nostrils itchin'
An' put twinkles in your eye.

An' you know th' thing tormentin'
That you ketch yourself a-scentin'
Is a joy your wife's inventin'—

Real Thanksgivin' punkin pie.

P— U— Unkin—
Punkin pie!

You don't want to wait a minute
For a chance to go ag'in' it—
Want to git your face down in it

Till it chokes you purty nigh.

Feel like you could finish seven,
Tackle nine an' mebbe 'leven—
But just ONE would be a heaven

If it's reg'lar Hoosier pie!

P— U— Unkin—
Punkin pie!

THE WONDERFUL LAND OF SEE

THREE'S a wonderful land that babies
explore;

We will call it the Land of See;
It runs from the hall to the old kitchen door,
Then back to a fond mother's knee.
And sometimes their world is a big window-
seat,

Or under the green bay tree—
Wherever it is, you will hear them repeat
Their mystical joy-word: "See?"

And what do they see? Well, nobody
knows;

To them things are all that they seem.
The wall-paper's flower quite suddenly
grows,
There's snow in the teakettle's steam.

The mirror is peopled with real little girls
And not just with faces that beam;
The bed is an ocean that tumbles and whirls
And makes the "See?" mariners scream!

They "See?" and point fingers at mythical
things
That grown-ups know never could be;
Yet each pointed finger some memory
brings
Quite clearly to you and to me.
For one time, we, too, on Fancy's gay
wings
Made flights 'round a dear mother's knee,
But Time came along and severed the
strings,
Then stole our fair Land of See.



LITTLE LADY 'PRINKLECAN

LITTLE Lady 'Prinklecan,
'At's what our next neighbor man
All time calls me when I go
'Prinklin' where our flowers grow.
Ever' day an' ever' day
'At's what our next neighbor say.

I ist like to get up soon
'Fore it's nearly afternoon,
'Nen go find my 'prinklecan
An' ist make our neighbor man
Laugh an' laugh till he can't see
Laughin' by hisself at me.

Seem like flowers don't know when
They must drink some water, 'nen



I ist got to go an' look
If their water's all been took.
'Nen I got to 'prinkle—see?—
Till he comes an' laughs at me.

I ist play like I don't care
If he's standin' laughin' there.
Too, he jokes me 'bout my hat
An' my feets an' things like that.
'Nen we both laugh—'cause, you see,
I ist all time 'prinkle me!

WHEN YOU'VE BEEN AWAY A WHILE

OFTTIMES, in life's endeavor,
 You grow weary of the way
Your feet, the slaves of custom,
 Tread the same old paths each day.
You tire of things and faces
 And, well, somehow, can not down
A deep, insatiate longing
 Just to get away from town.
You'd leave to-day's environs
 Far behind you, mile on mile,
And, to-morrow, would be happy,
 When you'd got away a while.

The way might lead to cities,
 Or where land and oceans meet,

Though, sometimes, Nature's solitudes
 Make freedom doubly sweet.
But days will come, O Wanderer,
 I care not where you roam,
When magnets wrought of hearth-love
 Will turn your feet toward home.
You'll find, too, that you're hungry
 For an honest, friendly smile;
They seem so worth the having—
 When you've been away a while.

The homebound train moves slowly,
 Though the time card says it's fast;
The homebound heart's impatient,
 But all trains get there at last.
With nose against the window
 You will peer out in the night
To have your vision gladdened
 By the first electric light.



112 WHEN YOU'VE BEEN AWAY A WHILE

And if you've come in daytime

You will hurry down the aisle
Half-shouting: "It's the old town!

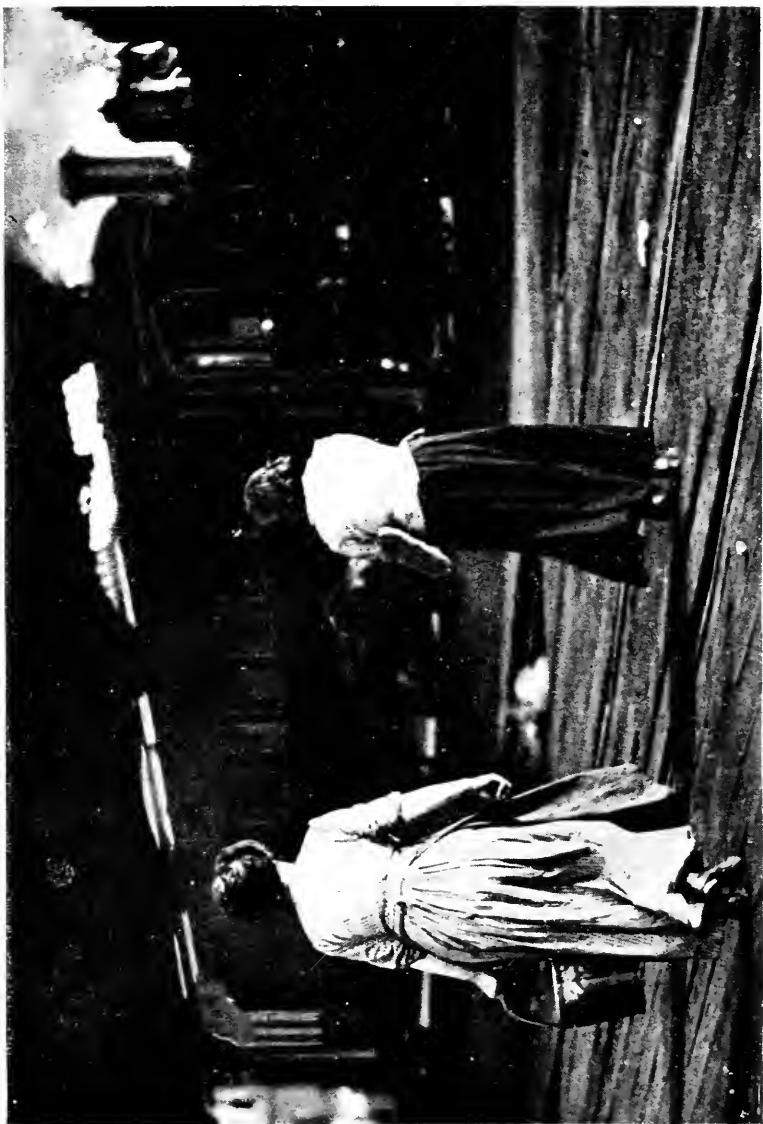
I've been gone an awful while!"

THE MOP MARYS

DOWN in the Yard, with its dust
and din,
Its “Limiteds” out and “Fast Mails” in,
There toil two women of sturdy frame,
Unsung in ballad nor known to fame,
And yet, in life, with its sordid trend,
They serve a worthy and useful end.
Mop Marys, they call them, which name
 regards

The work they do in the Pullman yards.

We stand and view, with wondering eye,
The great steel caravan rushing by,
Yet never a thought commends the arms
That gave the train its burnished charms.
We ponder not on the hours of toil,
The battles with dust and grime and oil;



Of backs that bend and of aching knees
That spell train elegance, comfort, ease!

From dawn of day till the twilight hour
They mop and dust and scrub and scour,
Though Life's grim irony

plays them mean—

They travel not in the cars they clean.
Still, back of it all, their hearts aspire
For something more than their humble hire.
'Tis an inner joy they can't explain,
Born when you say:

“What a splendid train!”

THE OLD HIGH CHAIR

AT the door of a shop
In quaint Second-hand Square
Stands a battered, discarded,
Old-fashioned high chair.
Its legs have grown wabbly,
Its back is infirm,
The arms show the stress
Of each juvenile squirm.
Its foot-rest is rounded by shuffling of feet,
The paint has long vanished
From arms, back and seat.
Each passer-by knows, by its vagabond tone,
That more than one baby
Has ruled from its throne.

Each worn arm exhibits
A spoon's crescent dent



By some little tartar with anger to vent.
And if you look closely

No doubt you'll see, too,
The imprints of teeth
That were just coming through.
One almost can picture,
Through Fancy's design.
The days when 'twas your chair—
Or maybe 'twas mine!
Ah, well, it was some one's—
This rattlebox throne
That stands on the sidewalk—
Deserted!—alone!

But where are the babies?
The world wonders where
Are all of the toddlers
Who've clung to this chair?
Have they become grown-ups
And passed from the maze

Of Lullabyland and its baby chair days?

God grant 'twas not Want,

Every mother-heart's dread,

That caused one to barter

This treasure for bread.

And if He of Heaven made vacant her chair

No doubt one as comfy

Was waiting Up There!

GOOD OLD MISTER BOBSLED

GOOD old Mister Bobsled
Friend of long ago,
How I long to see, you, Bob,
Soon as they's a snow.

Sort of git to feelin'
How 'twould do me good
Just to go to town ag'in
On a bob o' wood.

Daddy up a-drivin',
Me an' ma an' Milt
Sittin' there behind him
Snugged up in a quilt.

Comforters a-plenty,
Irons to warm our feet,
Yes, an' sticks o' hick'ry wood
Servin' fer a seat.

Hear th' snow a-creakin'
As we'd scoot along,
Somethin' kind o' angel-like
In th' runners' song.

Nick an' Nell a-trottin'
Down old Heston road,
Nary thought about their sins
Er their heavy load.

Good old Mister Bobsled,
Though ye're out o' style,
Still ye've got them fancy sleds
Beat a thousan' mile.

'Least that's my opinion,
An' I'd ort to know—
'Cause me an' you was kinfolks
Forty years ago.

THE HANDICAP OF RICHES

HERE, looky, Jimmy! Looky here!
Dat's w'at I meant, ye see,
A-blowin' how de rich guy's kids
Ain't got no edge on me.

It's named a radiator, Jim,
A fancy heatin' scheme;
A 'ristocrat's base burnerer
'Cept it's he't up by steam.

Now, w'at's got me a-guessin', kid,
Is how old Sant' will do
W'en he bumps up ag'in' a shack
Wit' pipes instead o' flue.

Naw, swells ain't got no chimblys, pal,
Fer dat's not style, ye see,

An' how dem poor rich kids'll git
Deir gifts is puzzlin' me.

Dis s'pose ole Sant' did go thoo pipes
'Bout all dat he could take
Would be a string o' wieniewursts
Er artificial snake.

Jim, dat ain't square w'en guys like us
Got chimblys in our house
W'at lets de ole saint scramble down
As quiet as a mouse.

Still, I ixpect he'll find a way
To reach de rich kids, too,
An' I ain't hopin' dat he won't;
I ain't dat mean—are you?

AN EARLY AUTUMN LULLABY

SUMMAH'S gone a-glimmahin'
An' de Fall-time's in de breeze;
Hush, ma little 'possum-lubbin' babe!
De 'simmons am a-waitin' fo' de fros'
To hit de trees;
Hush, ma little 'possum-lubbin' babe!
De 'possum am a-skimmin' out to fin'
A place to hide,
De bobolink's gone southwahd
To wintah wif his bride,
De whole creation's singin'
An' yo' mammy's satisfied—
So, hush, ma little 'possum-lubbin' babe!

De no'th wind am a-shahp'nin' up
To pinch ma baby's toes;
Hush, ma little 'possum-lubbin' babe!

Yo' daddy am a-splittin' wood
To buy his baby clo'es;
Hush, ma little 'possum-lubbin' babe!
De turkey gobblah's struttin' 'roun'
An' showin' off his pride,
De punkin's got so fleshy
Dat he's layin' on his side,
De worl' am full ob music
An' yo' mammy's satisfied—
So, hush, ma little 'possum-lubbin' babe!

THE PLUGGER

THEY call him just simply
The Plugger,
An old horse, worn, clumsy and gray,
He drags an old wagon marked "Transfer"
From dawn till the close of the day.

He hasn't a charm you would speak of,
His hair has the thickness of wool;
Just one thing they say of The Plugger—
He's there on the long, steady pull!

The high-headed colts leave him trailing
And give him the dust of the road,
But when they are drooping and weary
Old Plugger goes by with his load.

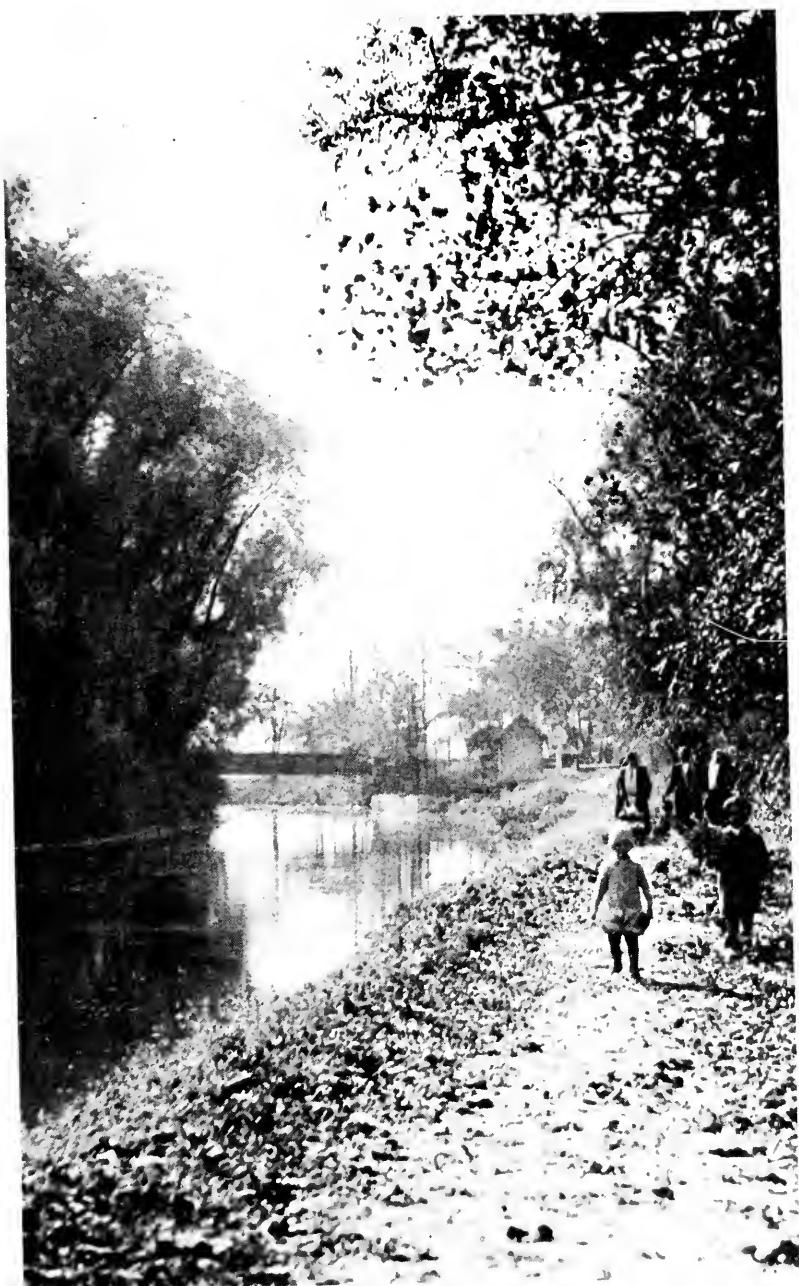
So take your life's lesson from Plugger,
Of logic his story is full;
Don't spend all your strength
in the morning—
The evening load's hardest to pull!

AUTUMN ON THE TOWPATH

THE sun, athwart the willow's
Latticed limbs,
Jewels the water, tints the leaves ashore;
The wind, sweet singer
Of a thousand hymns,
Low chants the lyrics of a thousand more.

A haze, November's garb of filmy gray,
Hangs spectre-like,
Above yon Fairview hill.
Now, but for waters rippling on their way,
My world this morning is a world a-still.

The sycamores, white-bodied giants born
To save the forests from a Stygian fate,



Seem somber now—

Grim woodland kings forlorn
Beside the dogwood's brilliant robes of state.

The path is strewn

With leaves of countless hues,
Countless indeed as are the years that span
The distant time since first

The frosts and dews
Made Autumn's pageant glorious to man.

The silence breaks!

Adown the towpath's way
Children pursue
Youth's fabled Forty Thieves!
Behind the trees
They seek their fancied prey
And search for footprints
In the fallen leaves.

IN THE BACK-LOT LEAGUE

THINGS are doing on the Common,
Down the alley, up the street;
There's a Tyrus Cobb expression
Worn by every kid you meet.
There is talk of "rotten empires,"
Talk of games both lost and won,
All proclaiming that the season
In the Back-Lot League's begun!

Mother's ball of twine is missing,
Store string saved since early fall,
But she knows it now is serving
As her Back-Lot Leaguer's ball.
In the yard she finds old broom ends,
Mop ends, hoes and things like that,
Proof to her that once good handles
Rival now the store-bought bat.



In the evening on the corner,

Where the arc light casts its rays,
Future diamond kings sit "fanning,"

Talking over scores and plays.

Just one problem proves perplexing,

One that makes the pitcher pout:

"Why—dis 'cause his Dad's a copper—

Dassen't no one strike Red out?"

THAT FELLOW

THAT fellow who has power
 Abounding in his heart
With which to stop your sighing
 And give the smiles a start;
That fellow who says “Howdy,”
 When “Howdy’s” what you need
To slow you down and make you
 Forget the Grind of Greed;
That fellow has within him
 A soul that I contend
Comes mighty near to being
 The synonym of friend.

That fellow, you may notice,
 Will pause to pat a nag,
Or bind a dog’s abrasions
 With handkerchief or rag.

You'll see him lead a blind man
 Across the crowded street,
Then slip some wreck a nickel
 And help him to his feet.
You'll hear he smokes and cusses,
 Drinks sometimes, too, they'll say,
And yet he's always bright'ning
 Some other fellow's way.

That fellow—well, his culture
 May not be up to form,
But in his calloused handclasp
 There's something good and warm.
He seems, somehow, to blossom
 Where weeds of sorrow grow,
Though mighty little Bible
 He'd ever boast to know.
And if the watchful angels,
 Who bless that heart of his,
Were asked: "Is he a Christian?"
 I'm sure they'd say: "He is!"



THE OLD TRACK GANG

’TWAS just an ould photograph,
Faded an’ yellow,
Long treasured in somebody’s Album,
 Oi know,
But from it came mimories,
 Sacred an’ mellow,
Thot gave me back fr’inds
 Av a glad long ago.

It brought to me moind
 Th’ ould thrack gang, begorra,
Thim b’ys as well knew
 How a rail should be laid;
Thim lads as could work
 All to-noight an’ to-morrow,
Thin spit on their hands
 An’ go livel a grade.

Though humble an' poor,
They were min, let me tell ye,
Wid gentlemen's proide
In their sinew an' bone;
Their hearts were as babes
If a sorrow befell ye,
But pity they'd none
For a blackgyard or drone.

Down there on th' thrack
Wid their shovels an' gauges,
Their picks an' their crowbars
Av hefty desoign,
Ye heard not a word
About History's pages,
But: "Squint at that rail, lads,
An' git it in loine."

Shure they had no derricks
Or fancy invintions

For liftin' the rails

From th' top av th' car;

They used Oirish muscle

Av Trojan diminsions

An' tumbled thim off

Wid th' aid av a bar.

They tamped ties an' laughed

Av their own youthful glory

Whin they wint a-sparkin'

On Erin's ould sod;

They paused now an' thin

For th' joke av a shtory

An' pitied poor divils

Thot carried th' hod.

At noon, whin th' boss

Sounded truce for an hour,

Their dinnerpails filled

Iv'ry innermost nade;



Thin, p'aceful an' calm
As a midsummer shower,
They smoked their dudeens
In th' cool av th' shade.

But thim was th' ould days—
Days sacred an' mellow—
Whin thrack-layin' shkill
Was a virtue, begob,

142 THE OLD TRACK GANG

So take off yer hat to ould ganus,

Young fellow—

Thim b'ys could build railroad—

An' loaf on th' job!

THE WATER CURE

EVERY human bein' livin',
I suppose, some time or other
Feels a kind of vagrant impulse
To go seekin' pastures new;
You grow tired of work an' worry,
Long for other scenes an' faces
'Way off where th' world is gayer
An' th' skies a brighter blue.
But I've cured myself of havin'
All those wild, unsettled longin's
An' th' antidote is simple—
Simple, sweet an' free from pain.
I just light my pipe an' wander
Down along th' quiet river,
Climb a stump an' voice my gladness
In this made-by-me refrain:

I would rather be a ripple
On an Indiana river
Than a cloudburst in Sahara
Where they celebrate a rain!

There I sit an' watch th' water
As it rambles to'rd th' ocean,
Kind o' holdin' back an' wishin'
That it didn't have to go,
While th' ripples seem to anchor
'Long th' shore among th' grasses,
Glad to be in Indiana
An' to cease their restless flow.
An' I let my fancies figure
That th' shore-bound ripples really
Come to port to seek contentinent
An' escape Th' Ragin' Main.
Then I just grow glad all over
That I'm Hoosier-born an' happy



An' have got a home to go to
Where my heart can chant this strain:

I would rather be a ripple
On an Indiana river
Than a cloudburst in Sahara
Where they celebrate a rain!

THE GIRLS OF FIVE-MINUTES- TO-EIGHT

The old corner clock was in gossipy mood,
And so, in a spirit of jest,
I asked it, of all the girls that it knew,
Which ones it thought dearest and best.

“Just give me the Girls of Five-minutes-to-eight,”

The street clock was quick to reply.
“The happiest moments of all in the day
Are when they go fluttering by.

“In laughing battalions they hurry along
To office, to shop and to school;
They have but one thought—to get there
at eight!—

Their day’s long enough as a rule.

“I glory to see them in ginghams and lawns,
In bonnets of dainty design;
I smile when they call me their dear Father
Time,
Which makes them all daughters of mine.

“They’re business girls—yes, and happy
ones, too,
They’ve harnessed no masculine mate;
Not one of them wishes to wash some man’s
dishes—
At night—at Five-minutes-to-eight!”





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